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The wishes and dreams our hearts make in Oates's "Where are you going, where have you been?"

Stan Kozikowski

- 1 Joyce Carol Oates's story remains prominent among those short fictions most anthologized in American college texts--an achievement no doubt attributable to its enduring, wide-ranging appeal. Aside from having been made into Tom Cole's screenplay and Joyce Chopra's much-admired film *SmoothTalk*, the twice-award winning story has recently become the subject of a well-resourced casebook edited by Elaine Showalter; and it remains a fixture, even featured, in such first-line texts as Abcarian and Klotz's *Literature*; Barnet, Berman, Burto, and Cain's re-edition of *Literature*; Hans P. Guth and Gabriele L. Rico's *DiscoveringLiterature*; Lee Jacobus's *Literature*; Kirzner and Mandell's *Literature*, where it is featured in a "Fiction Casebook"; and Ann Charters' *The Story and Its Writer* as well as her (and Samuel Charters') *Literature and Its Writers*. In the last regard it is also a staple in short fiction anthologies such as Bohner and Dougherty's *Short Fiction* and Pickering's *Fiction 100*¹. Although highly regarded as a poet, essayist, novelist, playwright, and short fiction writer, Oates is best known to the general public as the author of "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" Consequently, although its first-time readers, typically college freshmen students, have been guided through the story's seemingly inexhaustible trove of suggestive meanings, its idiosyncratic styling weaves, within its varied richness, a pattern worth studying that brings together distinctive elements of theme, characterization, structure, imagery, and perspective in a format well ingrained in the American popular imagination. This pattern, although I have taught several different approaches to the story over the years, invokes something like a community of assent in young readers, who dispute far more among other interpretations.²
- 2 I would suggest that this popular young-reader-response comes from an American teen's 'grasp' of a powerfully fixed cultural 'handle' available to us all, but especially to young people nowadays, particularly young students' sense of a story. And I think that

this pattern as crafted into the story by Joyce Carol Oates evokes that ever-unrealized zone between consciousness and unconsciousness shaped from childhood--hers, ours, that of our students--recalling that ancient story modernized by Charles Perrault, popularized by the brothers Grimm, and implanted in the collective American semi-consciousness by Walt Disney--the tale of "Cinderella". Accordingly, Oates, in 1963 and then in her twenties herself,³ transformed most of the story's principle features, carrying them forth from Connie's psyche, especially through the content and tone of Connie's "trashy" dreamy state, to reveal something deep and permanent within the mythic strata of troubled twentieth century 'Cinderellan' American life--something that the young reader especially acknowledges in the process of growing, learning, and valuing experience.

- 3 Connie's dreamy escape, like Cinderella's, although it promises pleasurable resolution, unfortunately brings unresolved tensions upon her, as they are upon many young women, and sometimes men, by a mass culture (the story's audience--the "You" of the title) that, despite aspirations otherwise, unwarily depersonalizes, debases, and devours the feminine ideal, branding those young among us, especially girls attaining to womanhood, as nameless, faceless, even heedless victims of culturally prompted masculine sexual appetite, consumption, and disposal. In fact, the standard merchandising of human sexuality, before men and women young and old, in the American marketplace, although oriented greatly towards foods, attaches itself to all manner of commodities, becoming evident most where expected least, in appealing to children's dreams--those wondrous yet terrifying acts of human imagination, poised to aspire, and to ascend--yet dreams blandly controlled by the huckster's world illustrated in Barbie-Doll iconography, mindless pop music, arcane Miss Americana, heavily capitalized pornography, all of which inform Oates's reading of "Cinderella". A girl justly desires in the purity of her heart to be pretty, to feel good, to gain attention, and to be cherished--a dream in formation since early childhood. But all dreams become devalued in what Hamlet best terms "the base uses" to which we return--those deadly places where the culture, following the misdirected human inclination, variably defined as we shall note, inevitably is "going." Oates finds in the Cinderellan motif the pretensions and tensions of a serious, even tragic, contemporary conception of feminization targeted in the American predilection for merchandising flashy, readily consumable, and easily disposable commodities within a culture joyfully yet madly devouring its own resources of body, mind, and spirit, as well as its capacity even to imagine such losses.

- 4 Much in the story's fascinating complexity is rooted in its comprehensive stylistic involvement with the more recent versions, from Perrault to Disney, of the Cinderella tradition. A few aspects of the Cinderella analogy have been noted in an account of how the "story is full of fairy tales."⁴ But as diligently as this reading places the story in a tradition of several popular tales such as "Snow White," "The Three Little Pigs," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Cinderella," and "The Genie in the Bottle," it understates the psychological acumen with which Oates's story imaginatively reformulates the Cinderella *mythos*, placing it effectively within its cultural context. For, as Bruno Bettelheim, among others, has observed, the Cinderella story enacts the compensatory vision, dear to all children coming of age, that counteracts that universally seated conviction "deep within" the child "that Cinderella deserves her dejected state":

The oedipal disappointments which come at the end of this developmental stage cast deep shadows of doubt on the child's sense of his worthiness. He feels that if he

were really as deserving of love as he had thought, then his parents would never be critical of him or disappoint him. The only explanation for parental criticism the child can think of is that there must be some serious flaw in him which accounts for what he experiences as rejection.⁵

- 5 The childhood-induced Oedipal flaw, as Bettelheim fails to observe, is not only universally compounded by the culture, but it is principally represented in the culture as characteristic of feminine reality. Therefore, Connie, by 'acting out' her Oedipal resentment--in wishing her mother dead (the very condition of Cinderella's mother in the tale)--further problematizes her fate, adding, Bettelheim might say, "another reason to feel guilty." Therefore, such multiplied guilt "about desires to be dirty and disorderly" ultimately in the most honorific sense "makes every child identify with Cinderella, who is relegated to sit among the cinders":

Since the child has such "dirty" wishes, that is where he also belongs, and where he would end up if his parents knew of his desires. This is why every child needs to believe that even if he were thus degraded, eventually he would be rescued from such degradation and experience the most wonderful exaltation--as Cinderella does.⁶

- 6 Bettelheim, referring to "every" child, remains curiously blind to the distinctively victimized status of the *girl as featured in the tale* (along, for that matter, in other tales from childhood such as "Snow White," "Little Red Riding Hood," and "Little Miss Muffet"). But prior to satisfying her need to be released from such 'dirty' 'shame,' the feminine child, far more than the masculine child, must obediently endure her earth-bound affliction. In Perrault's fairy tale, from his *Contes de ma mère l'Oye*, the less transfigured young maid--gentle, refined, and gracious--is called "Cinderbottom" ("Cendrillon") as in the brothers Grimm version she is known as "Ashputtelle" because, as the authors have it, "she always looked dusty and dirty."⁷ The Disney version, playing lightly off the name by invoking "Cinderella,"⁸ covers up but cannot remove the stains of grimy guilt from this chariest maiden: Cinderella, as if deserving, is punished in having to do the 'dirty' work, and she fully accepts her 'soiled' role as her lot in life. Connie likewise is immediately associated with and helplessly mired in uncleanliness from the outset of the story. Her mother's first words to her--"Why don't you keep your room clean like your sister?"⁹--convey by an inexact analogy an exact contrast: The youthful Connie is 'dirty' and suspect, while the matured June is 'clean' and therefore the more favored.¹⁰ Connie's hair, which is "dark blonde"--she is told, and as we suggestively learn, "stinks," but that of her sister, free from such unacceptable filth, doesn't. June wins praise for her domestic virtue, for "she helped clean the house and cooked," while "Connie couldn't do a thing, her mind was filled with trashy daydreams." Yearning release from this condition so as to embrace, as Bettelheim remarks, fantasies of "exhilaration," the anticipation of imminent "rescue" becomes for Connie, as for Cinderella and all girls, the basis of the wish behind her most desired dream. This subconscious Cinderellan need to feel 'dirty' yet to be released from this state extends into, and is expressive of, the American market-culture, which calculates dissatisfactions that are typically only provisionally appeased. Consequently, in Oates's vision, the terms of the compensatory, restorative dream are all too readily available as a convenient fancy to everyone, young and old, in our happiness-crazed American culture. In our public cultural formations of joy--our childhood recreations, for example, with 'hot' toys, 'sweet' songs, and 'instant' model heroes--we too readily appropriate fantasies to salve momentarily the shame that has abided for centuries, whether transvalued from Hellenic defilement, Judeo-Christian

sin, or Modern Oedipal guilt. Such analgesic 'salvation,' the stuff of sleep, though an act as simple as feeding oneself, does, however, by virtue of its self-evident falseness, only exacerbate the inadequacy felt by the young even as it produces the collateral need to punish ourselves even more while we cheerfully hold out for those yearnings expressed by Cinderellan dreams.

- 7 Connie, therefore, like Cinderella, is reduced in name (from Constance) and thereby in moral status (from steadfastness and faithfulness), to a name that, among its meanings, suggests the illicit or fraudulent conduct of which Connie will accuse herself. Overlooked, and critically important, is the fact that her name evokes "concubine", the principle feminine figure in the Jewish biblical source of the title ("The Book of Judges", which invokes a story akin to that of Cinderella¹¹). Connie in Oates's tale is bereft of family identity having, like Cinderella, no surname. In both instances the single name conveys the character's hapless, devalued condition as an individual, as a member of a family, and as the diminished component of a socio-economic unit indifferent to even itself. Connie's familial, social, and economic disconnections, like Cinderella's, all the more heighten the contrast between her shamed solitude and the social modes by which she becomes solicited, valued, and appropriated. The defining element binding old tale and contemporary story is, of course, the dream of yearning, a key motif in itself.¹² Connie, like Disney's Cinderella, who sings, "A dream is a wish your heart makes," eagerly drifts off into fantasy, half-consciously yielding to her dream experience as she ardently wishes for a special place where she can feel good and be noticed; where she can enjoy rapturous music; and where she can meet her sweet, charming lover--her own 'prince charming'--whom she abstracts as the amorphous composite of all those boys who have dwelled in the pleasure zone of her affection. By these three means--the enjoyments of palace, pleasurable music, and prince charming--both young women plan their escapes from a household filled with sad antagonisms--a father's physical or moral absence, the sexual jealousy and hostility of a mother figure, the irritating probing of an older sister, and subjection to continual mistreatment. What is vital--namely, wishing where to go, what to feel, and whom to meet--are in both accounts played off against what has debased and deadened both girls at home: the disappointments of where they have been, what they have felt, and with whom they have had to share company. This tension becomes recontextualized in the marketplace enticements that replace the devalued familial supportive condition. This second, even more extreme, disjunctive effect, properly understood and directed by the story's interrogative title, conveys a spiritually depleted, secular *psychomachia*--an unresolved opposition between one set of misguided social attractions and another equally unacceptable set of prompts--for the 'salvation' (here, the physical well being) of one's flesh and blood.
- 8 On another frequency, of course, the split lies between Connie's brain and her mind, a split dictated, as Kay Redfield Jamison so poignantly observes, by the manic forces engendered by a culture that simultaneously attracts acutely with pleasure while rejecting harshly with painful trauma many people, most impressionably the young, who strive to live somehow integrally within it.¹³ Such mixed messages, directed to body, mind, and spirit, Oates incorporates as acquiescence yielding to misguided reverence. Appropriately, then, the critical gathering places in Connie's life, described as places of communion, are the dining table or barbeque at home, where food helps ritualize the vacuity that family space has become, or away from home, particularly the

"drive-in restaurant," where again, the claims of appetite bring young people together in unconscious religious charade. In the latter case, we see Connie brought to a place of romance envisioned, fitfully, as the sexually satisfying locus of masculine carnal appetite--the "drive in." Unacknowledged moral negligence not only underlies this sexual tension (inviting yet threatening) but also "the pretence of exasperation" facing Connie (Oates, 30) that lies at the heart of the insincerely concerted fighting between mother and daughter. Connie's mother chastises her for having the healthy vitalism that she herself has lost, thereby shaming her into the false sense of herself to which she is already prone. Bereft and adrift, helpless in a morally depleted trashland of her own, Connie finds her only *remedia*--precisely Cinderella's--in her desire to transform her ambivalent pining to be with her 'prince' into her desperate escape from the emotional and moral wasteland of her home. Along with her daydreaming of escaping to the arms of her lover in what she fantasizes as "a kind of love, the caresses of love," (Oates, 30) Connie experiences 'shame' in having repeatedly deceived her mother about the undisclosed sexual experience to which she flees: "Her mother was so simple, Connie thought, that it was maybe cruel to fool her so much." (Oates, 29). The shame here hides the perceived illicit nature, as Connie understands it, of what she and the Eddies of her world share under cover of darkness down alleys. Connie's ritual 'loss' evokes Cinderella's 'loss' in the night symbolized by a glass slipper that conveys not an actual serious moral failing, but something perceived as such. Like Cinderella Connie can hope only to venture forth under cover of darkness so that her family, her 'mother' especially, will not know where she has been. The drive-in, as with the prince's palace, is where both young women hope they are going. Both young woman, then, are granted their wishes. Connie brings to her dream certain activating points of consciousness which become metamorphosed and elaborated, as any dreamer well knows, into the mixed stuff of her sleep--these include recollections of her sneaking off to the place of her desire, her experiencing good feelings generated from music at the teen hangout, her being noticed by boys, teens given over to Bobby King's music show, and the specter of Arnold Friend and his golden convertible. These key elements on their surface are also, it so happens, the exact formulae of Cinderella's wishful dreaming--the surreptitious venture, the pleasure palace beckoning all lovely young women to the enchanting music of the ball, the 'King's' sponsorship of that ball, and the resplendent cream and gold coach and six. Thus, the unresolvable actualities of Connie's life and the emanations of one more of her "trashy daydreams" are fused together in a modern-day American "Cinderella" tale...but with some new twists.

- 9 Connie, "pretty," blonde-haired, good-natured but very uncomfortable, beleaguered, and neglected, lives at home, exactly as Cinderella, with a complaining, mean-spirited mother and an indifferent, ineffectual father. Connie's father, likewise, has been "lost", not at sea like Cinderella's, but even while at home. Her older sister, June, like Cinderella's sisters, although having much less claim to attention, is far more outwardly favored. Far less attractive, yet far more secure in her mother's affection, like Cinderella's sisters, June is obviously outwardly preferred by a mother embittered in her sexual jealousy. Connie and Cinderella also share a type of bimodal appearance: each is quite ordinary-looking about the house; but whether venturing to a cherished teen hangout or to a palace ball, each becomes transformed through her clothing into a radiant, youthful beauty. Each, attracting much attention, achieves her desired happiness; and each wins over her prince charming. Both young women long for the

opportunity to fulfill this cherished 'dream,' but such dreams of life all too often become nightmares of death.

- 10 Connie's Cinderella-life, however, takes on such dimension as she ventures forth once more, as Cinderella herself does, into *her* dream...essentially, a subset of the youthcultish 'American dream.' Connie, as her family drives off to the family barbecue, turns inwardly, away from her mother's angry stare, to a Hollywood wonderland of cherished comforts:

Connie sat out back in a lawn chair...Connie sat with her eyes closed in the sun, dreaming and dazed with the warmth about her as if this were a kind of love...the way it was in movies and promised in songs; and when she opened her eyes she hardly knew where she was....She shook her head as if to get awake. (Oates, 30-31)

- 11 As she "breathed in and breathed out with each gentle rise and fall of her chest," Connie in rhythmic sleep-like reverie brings to her filmland-dreamland other elements that will figure into her dream. One is that prevailing sense of human worthlessness that she has so readily accepted as her lot in life: "Connie's mother kept picking at her until Connie *wished* (my emphasis) her mother dead and she herself was dead and it was all over." (26) Connie's edginess hints at severe self-judgment: her implicit acknowledgment of her cindered self, her realization that she is indeed 'the kind of girl' she uncomfortably assures her mother she is not, that she, like Cinderella, must be a dirtied young lady, one who has indeed 'lost' something precious, fragile, irrevocable. In fact, Connie's assumed loss of innocence, like Cinderella's lost slipper, she must learn, can only be 'regained' by a prince charming's outlandish claim upon her. Connie's dream will carry out her own conflicted moral judgment upon herself for the shame that in the absence of evidence is only thought to be underlying what she has done. Connie's diametric feelings of wishing herself dead yet being granted love "promised in songs" therefore, because they are so essentially unrelated yet now for her so intimately related, are together enacted in dream. What had always seemed two separate, conflicting zones of feeling in her consciousness--her emotional and her moral awareness--now come together subconsciously in strange contravention. Her darkened selfhood and her fondest wish for light uneasily come together. Meanwhile this self-contesting quality in Connie's life is outwardly defined in, and indeed stimulated by, the now-popular iconography of veneration--what one critic has called our "counter-ideology"¹⁴ symbolized, as another critic has carefully noted, by the church-like "drive-in" with its bottled roof and "grinning boy" revolving atop it.¹⁵ Now venerated, Oates suggests, is our culture's reduced spirituality so evident in its enshrinement of childish sexuality mixing levity with appetite but haunted, profoundly, by something amiss, something separated, strangely attractive, and yet threatening. Neither Prince of Peace nor Prince of Charm, forever ensconced atop the building's spire is the ludicrously reductive figure of a rotating "grinning boy" holding up a hamburger. One must, Oates's story suggests, 'look up' to this lifeless yet turning figure beamishly posturing some elevated form of happiness.

- 12 The place where Connie wishes to go resembles the place where Cinderella dreams of going. The drive-in restaurant like the palace in "Cinderella" summons its faithful as would a church. The spells of music replace the peals of bells calling forth all fair young maidens to the place where the son of a 'King' can be found and where the 'sinner'--here, the afflicted maiden--can be called forth and 'saved' from the suffering she has borne. Certain moments in the Catholic Mass seem subtly reduced in Oates's story: the Communion call to the rail (Oates's story is set in the early sixties, when the Latinate

liturgy prevailed) becomes the promise of food at the restaurant's counter; the 'host' itself held high in the consecrated hamburger raised aloft by the revolving figure. Eddie's own 'grin' and 'turn' on the stool emulates this grinning, turning figure; and the girls crossing their ankles are all that remains of the Sign of the Cross. Oates thereby captures the sense of religious culture lost in the pleasurable rituals of childhood fantasy, trapped in self-denigration and made hapless in the "going" of life. Oates sees Connie as Cinderella, having been and going nowhere. Eddie, Connie's boyfriend, ceremonially acts out in postpubescent *imitatio* the icon's motions as he turns friskily upon his seat offering Connie a hamburger and a soda for another kind of happy turn down an alley. Before she and Eddie leave, Connie finds herself taking notice of another pilgrim to this shrine of toyish joy—"a boy" whose "lips widened into a grin" who then playfully yet ominously intones to her, "Gonna get you, baby." (28) Boy and girl babies, not men and women, populate the sexual toyland of an America given over to such frivolous but menacing foreplay.

- 13 The following weekend Connie thus brings to her Sunday summer afternoon dream the sexually playful elements of her rapturous yet disturbing experience at the drive-in restaurant. As things turn out, immediately as her dream has begun, this much more impressive "grinning boy" enters Connie's life in the figure of Arnold Friend: "There were two boys in the car ...and one was grinning at her." (31-2) This child of man imperially shows off his credentials as the vassal of a true 'king'--Bobby King. In effect a dutiful son to King, he proclaims "I listen to him all the time." (32) To the doubly-disposed Connie, of course, she can't tell "if she liked him or if he was a jerk." (33) Then, having trumpeted his car horn, he heralds himself:

"This here is my name, to begin with," he said. ARNOLD FRIEND was written in tarlike black letters on the side, with a drawing of a round, grinning face that reminded Connie of a pumpkin, except it wore sunglasses. (33)

- 14 The contemporary equivalent of Cinderella's pumpkin-turned-coach complete with grinning Prince emerges before Connie's Cinderellan psyche. Arnold, like the cartoon on his golden "convertible," presents to her his own silly, bizarre pumpkin face; and Connie, fascinated yet fearful, hesitates to encourage him. Arnold, for his part, comes to Connie with that same determination that drives the Prince to Cinderella. He will have his lady fair because, as he says, she's "the one." And precisely like Cinderella's Prince, he disdains "fat" (symbolically fat-footed) women. "I don't like them fat," he will announce, as if savoring fast food. (40) He is, of course, raging with hunger for 'his Connie,' who like her barefoot-in-the-house prototype, no longer wears her dancing shoes--in Connie's case, her customary "ballerina slippers." And true to the form of Cinderella's Prince, Arnold says, "I took a special interest in you, such a pretty girl, and found out all about you..." (35) Arnold confidently struts with the erogenous authority and power of Cinderella's Prince...the libidinous law of the land, which puts him in the company of our culture's Cinderellan acknowledgment that a woman, chosen merely for her arousing looks, her body's movement to music, her being "the one," must, like food on a fork, yield herself up. One social critic, citing what she calls "the Cinderella complex," voices concern that far too many American women remain trapped in helpless, even endangering dependency upon men.¹⁶ Another commentator, a psychologist, reads the Cinderella figure as the object of pervasive envy--the plight of many women who find themselves nullified, made helpless, and ultimately attacked.¹⁷ Oates defines the social contract as pretty much a one-sided proposition assuring men the rewards of sexual gratification for the mere grabbing. Most have one characteristic

in common: physical intimidation coupled with sexual immaturity posing as a morally responsible agency, cloaked in the authority of uniform or high office, or some sartorial emblem of power over youth (one recalls the military or royal dress, for example, of Michael Jackson, Elvis Presley, the Beatles, other 'uniformed' public figures, often targeting young, easily-summoned and readily subduable young women).

- 15 Connie, of course, though barely beyond childhood, detects some kind of fakery and suspects that Arnold is neither princely nor youthful. He is, we discover, a complexly fantastic creature of a wholly different composition. Part of him contains a vulgar parody of the impudent, offensive sexuality of the militantly homoerotic culture awkwardly parading itself in the lineaments of American youthcult. But the parody falls back upon itself. Arnold, of all things, even like those scorned, 'wannabe' Cinderellas of yore, has feet that simply do not fit where he imagines they should. Whether or not earth-bound in satanic affliction, he is a wobbling imposter in the parodic terms by which one's ultimate worth is valued in Cinderella's and America's world--by one's size--shoe or otherwise--and, of relatedly, by one's looking "pretty," one's inclining oneself to the deadening music of Bobby King's eschatological "XYZ Jamboree," and by one's being singled out for admiration in the process. This youthcultural requisite signals a special thematic effect in the story. In fact, the morally suspect Arnold cannot maintain the parody of childish human sexuality that he has tarted up. As a thirty-year-old man unsuccessfully passing himself off as a sexually attractive youth of eighteen, he ends up coming across in boorish mockery of that commercially feminized (not feminine) ideal of being "pretty" that the culture he symbolizes vulgarly upholds and pursues:

He grinned to reassure her and lines appeared at the corners of his mouth. His teeth were big and white. He grinned so broadly his eyes became slits and she saw how thick his lashes were, thick and big as if painted with a black tarlike material.
(38)

- 16 Reflecting forth his visceral obsessions, Arnold's sunglasses mirrored back to Connie the image of her blouse. Flaunting his face, Arnold Friend--whose namesans letter r's becomes "An Old Fiend"--can exhibit only a diabolic ferocity of appetite. But in his grotesque parody Arnold flashes his own version of the 'winning' Miss America smile under a heavy curtain of eye shadow in a face that is mascara muddied and 'masked' in "plastered" makeup, while he teeters about ridiculously in his high-heels, a shaky wig on his head, tight in his pullover and jeans, fretting and strutting--wobbling, actually--his hour upon the walkway. Arnold's wobbling about, as the stuff of Connie's dream, evokes another vestige of the grinning hamburger boy who turns about the drive-in's steepled roof. He's virtually everything that one could ever fantasize of an impostor--a phony Prince and a fake Cinderella to boot. Even the music he 'sings' in his pitch to Connie is spurious--the rowdy trash of poprock accorded the solemnity of religious hymn. And in his teetering-tottering eminence, male or female, he embodies the overcontrived appeal of virtually every pop icon that the merchandising media have created for public consumption or emulation, from Presley to Prince, Monroe to Madonna, James Bond to Ken and Barbie, a pin-up culture to a universe of childish sexual 'playmates' and 'pets.' Making himself a clumsy joke of how anyone can become a 'dashing' prince or 'beautiful' princess if one sets one's life to it, the banal Arnold Friend affirms the unfortunate truth that for too many, young women especially, such a 'dream' of recreating oneself, whatever its frightening impact, has indeed taken firm

hold of the collective psyche. After all, like all that he stalks, he is his culture's creation...both its dream and nightmare.

- 17 Arnold, overblown as he is, still plays the Prince, exercising his royal claim, having discovered his "barefoot" lady fair: "Seen you that night and thought, that's the one, yes sir. I never needed to look anymore." (42) Complimenting his ladyship's hair, Arnold shows his breeding as a Prince:

"...I thank you sweetheart," he said with a mock bow, but again he almost lost his balance. He had to bend and adjust his boots. Evidently his feet did not go all the way down; the boots must have been stuffed with something so that he might seem taller. (42-43)

- 18 To coax her out, this sinister Prince threateningly assures her that, now that her hour has come, there is no father for her, nor for that matter any fairy godmother with her miracle fowl and other charmed objects: "Hey, you know that old woman down the road, the one with the chickens and stuff--you know her?" (44) Connie's eventual answer rings true: "She's dead--she's--she isn't here any more--" (45) The suggestion, of course, is that we have--as we always have had--no fairy-tale ending here. No coach and six will await Connie, only a "convertible jalopy" with its mocking cartoon of this pumpkin-faced, grinning Prince of Darkness intent upon taking Connie on another journey, where indeed she may join the dead "old woman down the road." Arnold's sing-song voice, given hymnal validation by the popculture, accompanies his ever-childish, now-menacing insincerity. He, like Cinderella's youthful Prince, has come to take Connie away from everyplace where she has been. Connie's wish upon a star and her death wish have become one.

- 19 Joyce Carol Oates, in having drawn much of the idiosyncratic detail of Arnold Friend's parodic quality directly from the March 1966 *Life* magazine descriptive account of serial-killer Charles Schmidt, the "Pied Piper of Tucson,"¹⁸ who in fact fashioned himself after his idol, Elvis Presley, illustrates how fact and fancy in art take on the same confusion as life and art in reality. Most of the details in the descriptive catalogue of Arnold Friend are drawn from the *Life* account. The 'author' here, then, proves to have been as much a deranged murderer and an ambitious magazine writer as an innocent young lady in dream... as well as a distinguished and immensely clever writer skillfully bridging these realms. This confusion as to what is real or not and where it comes from, long a fascination with Joyce Carol Oates, along with the title of her famous story, informs the brilliantly ambiguous portrait of Corky in the Epilogue of her recent novel *What I Lived For*, and the astonishingly calm duplicity of Quentin P depicted in her recent novella, *Zombie*. In this fashion, she suggests, the iniquitous farce of our nowadays plays itself out in the horrid truth of its self-parody found within a child's honestly contradictory vision of life, America's escapable dream and inescapable nightmare,¹⁹ from which we create what devours us, and blaspheme what we revere. In the seemingly vain, nervous and unsteady emotionalism of a teen-age girl, Oates, from the integrity of her art, locates the issues defining the breakdown of fundamental moral consciousness of our Age of Appetite in the fantasy of a child-victim whose eventual sacrifices mock our culture's mindless self-consumptions.

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NOTES

1. Richard Abcarian and Marvin Klotz, *Literature: Reading and Writing the Human Experience*, 7th Edition. (Boston: Bedford, 2000); Charles Bohner and Dean Dougherty, *Short Fiction Classic and Contemporary* 4th Edition (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1999); Ann Charters and Samuel Charters, *Literature and Its Writers* (Boston: Bedford, 1997); Ann Charters, *The Story and Its Writer*, 5th Edition (Boston: Bedford, 1999); Hans P. Guth and Gabriele L. Rico, *Discovering Literature* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2000); Lee A. Jacobus, *Literature: An Introduction to Critical Reading* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1996); Laurie G. Kirzner and Stephen R. Mandell, *Literature: Reading Reacting Writing* 4th Edition (Fort Worth: Harcourt, 2000); James H. Pickering, *Fiction 100*, 8th Edition (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1998)

2. Students focus, of course, on the matter of whether Arnold Friend steals off with and murders Connie before they find interesting the issue of whether the crux of the story consists of a dream or an actuality that Connie experiences. Typically, then, the issue of what Arnold Friend represents comes into the forefront of discussions.
3. See the Introduction to the Casebook *Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?* edited by Elaine Showalter (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995).
4. Gretchen Schultz and R.J.R. Rockwood, "In Fairyland, Without a Map: Oates's 'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?'" in *Literature and Psychology* 30 (1980), 1545-67.
5. Bruno Bettelheim, "'Cinderella': A Story of Sibling Rivalry and Oedipal Conflicts," *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Knopf, 1975), p. 524.
6. Bettelheim, p. 531.
7. Jane Yolen, "America's 'Cinderella,'" from *Children's Literature in Education*, 8 (Curtis Brown, 1977), pp. 21-29. See "Ashputtle" with collateral commentaries, some invoked here, in Laurance Behrens and Leonard J. Rosen's *Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum*, 4th Ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), pp. 312-18.
8. "Walt Disney's 'Cinderella'" adapted by Campbell Grant in *Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum*, pp. 326-28.
9. All references to the text of "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" are taken from the casebook *Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?* Ed. Elaine Showalter (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press) hereafter cited as "Oates."
10. In Disney's, Grimm's, and Perrault's versions because Cinderella works she is 'dirty' whereas in Oates by its very presence Connie's smell, associated with her perceived laziness, is repulsive to her mother.
11. The theory that the source of the story's title is "Judges 19:17", reached by counting thirty-three books from the end of the Jewish Bible (properly, of course, the way to "read" the so-called Old Testament), the 33-19-17 "secret code" written on the side of Friend's car, is indeed an attractive one. The King Jamesverse line reads "And when he lifted his eyes he saw a wayfaring man in the street of the city; and the old man said, Whither goest thou? And whence comest thou?" This account of a man--the man addressed-- and his concubine, who is sacrificed to "the men of the city" who have come to their guest house demanding their pleasure, is strikingly similar to Oates's basic plot.
12. Larry Rubin, "Oates's 'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?'" *The Explicator* 42 (1984), 57-59.
13. Kay Redfield Jamison, *An Unquiet Mind* (New York: Alfred R. Knopf, 1955).
14. Marilyn C. Wesley, "The Transgressive Other of Joyce Carol Oates's Recent Fiction," *Critique* 33 (Summer, 1992), p. 255.
15. Joyce M. Wegs, "'Don't You Know Who I Am?': The Grotesque in Oates's 'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?'" *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 5 (1975), p. 67. Wegs subtly does justice to Oates's perspicuity in defining the deflated religious *milieu* so evident in the story.
16. Colette Dowling, *The Cinderella Complex: Women's Hidden Fear of Independence*. (New York: Summit, 1981), pp. 29-30.
17. Ann Ulanov and Barry Ulanov, *Cinderella & Her Sisters: The Envied and the Envyng*. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), pp. 17-20.
18. Don Moser, "The Pied piper of Tuscon: He Cruised in a Golden Car Looking for the Action" in *Where Are you Going, Where Have You Been?* p. 51.
19. D. F. Hurley, "Impure Realism: Joyce Carol Oates's 'Where Are you Going, Where Have You Been?'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 28 (Summer, 1991), p. 374. Hurley's insightful piece on the play of fact and fiction in Oates's story carries forth commentary from two previous essays in *Studies in Short Fiction*: and A. R. Coulthard's provocative "Joyce Carol Oates's 'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 26 (Fall, 1989), 505-510.

ABSTRACTS

La nouvelle extraordinairement populaire de Joyces Carol Oates doit beaucoup à sa fascinante complexité, reformulant le mythe de Cendrillon pour aboutir à un commentaire pénétrant sur la culture de consommation américaine qui valorise, tout comme le font les mondes évoqués dans d'autres versions du conte, une domination mâle outrancière. La version donnée par Oates de ce conte de fée met en exergue l'écart radical entre les rêves de bonheur d'une jeune femme en Amérique et la cauchemardesque réalité que donne à vivre une société mercantile qui réduit la femme sous prétexte de l'exalter. Les topoï de l'histoire, rendus populaires par Walt Disney, sont évoqués ici où Connie rêve de son "Prince Charmant", Oates rappelant habilement par de nombreux détails l'histoire de Cendrillon. Par conséquent, la farce vicieuse de l'Amérique contemporaine se joue dans les vérités affreuses de l'auto-parodie d'une vision de la vie naïvement contradictoire d'une jeune femme – à la fois dans la version édulcorée de Disney et dans la version horrifique de Oates – une vision de la vie qu'ignore encore cette société qui mésestime et dévalorise la femme.

AUTHORS

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